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Chairman:

Mr. PETRESKI

(The former Yugoslav Republic
of Macedonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: RENEWAL OF THE DIALOGUE ON STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP (A/50/475, A/50/480 and A/50/518)

1. Mr. KHAN (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/50/480), drew attention to the notion of interconnectedness, a central feature of the approach outlined in the report. Thus, the issue should be viewed in the larger context of the renewal of international economic cooperation for development, as well as the renewal and reform of the Organization itself, and it was closely linked both to ongoing work on the agenda for development and to the coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences.

2. In addition, the renewed dialogue should be conducted in a manner more relevant to concerns affecting people at large, thus making the United Nations more responsive to their problems. To that end, it should transcend the limits of the United Nations and its intergovernmental organs and be carried out in an open-ended process with the participation of regional intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the academic and scientific community.

3. The themes addressed should be selected by Governments from among those most amenable to a renewed dialogue, as proposed in the report, based on partnership and mutual interest.

4. Mr. AGUIRRE DE CÁRCER (Spain), speaking also on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union welcomed the Secretary-General's report and, in particular, the thematic approach which it proposed. In his view, the Committee's discussion of the issue could also be affected by its future discussions on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields and, for that reason, consideration of the issue should not be confined to a separate agenda item but incorporated into one of the related items.

5. Mr. ISAKOV (Russian Federation) said that the elaboration of the agenda for development was crucial for the strengthening of dialogue and partnership. For that reason, the issues addressed should respond to the interests of all countries and the dialogue itself should involve not only organizations of the United Nations system but also non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

6. With regard to the list of topics, he stressed that it could be expanded to include issues of global importance, such as, in particular, military conversion and the sustainable development of countries with economies in transition. At the same time, the selection of topics should be harmonized with the ongoing elaboration of the agenda for development. Finally, he agreed with the representative of Spain that careful consideration should be given to the possibility of considering the issue under other agenda items.

7. Mr. Dong Wook KIM (Republic of Korea) said that the United Nations must play a more active and central role in shaping the course of international development and that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should assume a leading role. To that end its responsibility for coordinating development operations should be enhanced and its field offices strengthened; the process of decentralization should continue.

8. The United Nations, in particular UNDP, should reinforce its operational activities. The specific interests and potential of individual States and subregions should be taken fully into account in the formulation of policy guidance.

9. South-South cooperation should be considered an integral part of the strategy to breathe new life into international development cooperation. Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries would provide a stronger basis for self-reliance and development. Assistance from developed countries would help to revitalize South-South cooperation.

10. Lastly, his delegation strongly urged international organizations to provide forums for the sharing of the success and experiences of newly industrializing countries, as that would contribute to the capacity-building of the developing countries.

11. Mr. ALAVI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that a full and balanced assessment of the challenges, opportunities, risks and uncertainties which characterized the current world economy was imperative in order to strengthen international cooperation in general, and international cooperation for development in particular.

12. He agreed with the Secretary-General that the agenda for development would have a direct bearing on the selection of themes for the pursuit of the development dialogue in the next phase. International cooperation for development should aim to create an international economic environment which facilitated the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The concerns of developing countries regarding the formidable impediments to their development must be addressed. The themes for the desired dialogue included the following key issues: the adverse effects of the external economic environment on the development process, characterized by protectionism and unilateral action on the part of developed countries; the immediate elimination of coercive economic measures against developing countries; the deteriorating terms of trade for developing countries; the stagnation and decline of official development assistance; restrictions on access to technologies critical to development; the inadequate and arbitrary allocation of resources by international financial institutions; volatile financial flows to developing countries; instability in global markets and fluctuations in exchange rates; the widening income gap between developed and developing countries; macroeconomic policy coordination at the international level; transparency in the international economic decision-making process with full involvement of the developing countries; the expeditious implementation of agreed international commitments and targets regarding development; elimination of non-economic conditions for national economic cooperation; and cooperation

between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Trade Organization.

13. In accordance with Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly was the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of policy on economic, social and related matters, and it therefore was the main forum in which Governments should pursue the development dialogue. As to the modalities for conducting the dialogue, his delegation was in favour of convening a United Nations conference on the financing of development. Naturally, achievement of the international community's common ideals required a strong political commitment, in particular, by the developed countries.

14. Mr. SINGH (India) said that the initiative outlined in document A/50/480 provided an opportunity to advance the cause of development, effectively reorient the focus of United Nations development activities and to promote the central role of the United Nations in the development dialogue. He agreed with the statement in paragraph 10 that the themes to be dealt with in the dialogue should be "at the cutting-edge of international economic relations".

15. It was important, when selecting the themes, to avoid duplication with similar debates under way in other forums. The suggested themes of globalization and the rules of the game and new information technologies and the global economy should be the first to be taken up in the General Assembly. The themes of competition and regional integration and the global economy should be referred to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the General Assembly could then consider the relevant UNCTAD report in 1997. A decision on whether to include the themes of international migration, prevention and management of emergencies and post-conflict peace-building and crime, drugs, violence and global stability should be taken at a later stage, since they were being discussed in other United Nations forums.

16. He endorsed the modalities proposed for the dialogue in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the report of the Secretary-General. The involvement of organizations outside the United Nations system also should set a precedent for their involvement in aspects of the work of the United Nations outside the economic and social sectors.

17. Ms. PACHTER (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) said that the agenda of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) reflected a determination to give development the prominence it deserved. At the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the President of the Bank had called for poverty alleviation, protection of the environment, social justice, the strengthening of human rights and the advancement of women's rights. At a time when instability threatened many countries, a decrease in funding for the International Development Association, the source of bank development funds, would be dangerous.

18. The World Bank was building its United Nations partnerships in support of economic development and was exploring new areas. Its efforts included cooperation with other agencies with respect to post-conflict reconstruction and work to combat HIV/AIDS. The Bank stressed the importance of practical, on-site

cooperation between agencies based on the capacity and comparative advantage of the partners. The Bank would continue its useful dialogue with leaders of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. Examples of such cooperation included the recent establishment of three World Bank/UNDP task forces to study in-country cooperation, aid coordination and complex emergencies.

19. The World Bank had been involved in the preparatory phase for various United Nations conferences, had attended them and was currently actively working on conference follow-up to and support of initiatives of the Secretary-General. He cited examples of those activities.

20. The work of the United Nations and its related bodies would not be effective without active partnerships with developing country Governments, non-governmental organizations and all elements of civil society, including the private sector.

21. Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia) said that, while the concept and spirit of partnership had been widely embraced by the international community, the resulting agreements and commitments had not been fully translated into action. He therefore stressed the need to maintain the spirit of partnership at as high a level as possible during negotiations on global development issues.

22. With regard to the issues proposed by the Secretary-General for consideration in the dialogue, his delegation believed that the selection process should be harmonized with the ongoing elaboration of the agenda for development. In particular, the elements proposed by the working group for inclusion in the agenda should be taken into consideration in the selection of issues for the dialogue and, in the spirit of General Assembly resolutions 48/165 and 49/95, the dialogue and the agenda for development should be mutually interconnected.

23. Since the issues and themes selected should be relevant to all groups, particular importance attached to the issue of modalities: thus, preparations for the discussions should be broadened beyond the United Nations itself, to include other actors in the development process. For example, a high-level segment could be held at the beginning of the General Assembly, for the formulation of policies and guidelines which would be further elaborated in the appropriate forums.

24. Finally, it was imperative that the dialogue should be conducted in an atmosphere of trust, and the interests of the weakest developing countries should be given high priority.

25. Mr. THEOPHYLACTOU (Cyprus) said that the item was of particular importance to his country. Cyprus's commitment to the promotion of peace and economic development through partnership was demonstrated by its support for the Israeli-Palestinian accords, for without peace in the Middle East, regional and international stability would remain an elusive goal.

26. Cyprus was ready and willing to become a bridge of cooperation between Europe and the Middle East and, in the spirit of that conviction, had recently presented to the Palestinian leadership in Gaza a comprehensive aid package.

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which, it hoped, would help create a climate of hope and attract the thousands of reconstruction. That bilateral cooperation was a genuine aspect of participation in the Middle East peace negotiations aimed at restoring cooperation through dialogue based on partnership, as advocated by the Secretary-General in his report. Accordingly, Cyprus also pledged its support for the forthcoming high level meeting in the Mediterranean and Middle East region and would do its utmost to ensure effective use of all relevant meetings.

The meeting was held at 11.00 a.m.